Create a Cohesive Digital First Impression

If someone were to look up you on social media right now, what would their first impression be of you?

Having a recognizable and memorable brand is the first step towards making a lasting impression in your industry. So how do you communicate your brand on social media? Start with a cohesive branding kit. Here's where you have the chance to create a cohesive social branding first impression:

- Headers

- Banners

- Images for posts

Businesses have particular colors, fonts and image styles that they use in their visuals. As an MBA, there's no reason why you can't apply the same tactics to your own social pages.

You'll want to have a clear idea of what message you want to communicate to your target audience and tailor the visuals on your social platform pages to fit that message.

1. What's Your Message?

This is the most important step in the process because not only will it guide your visuals, it will also help guide every post you make on your social pages.

Remember the elevator pitch? The same concept can be applied to your social pages' design and headline copy. The classic elevator pitch should last no more than 20-30 seconds. But when people land on a social media page, they view the page for even less time.

That's why images are so important on social. In a snap second, they can communicate everything you need to know.

Your message should communicate:

❑ Your goal
❑ What you do
❑ Your value to your audience

So whatever images, colors, fonts, and copy you decide to include to lend toward communicating this central message.

2. Pick Images That Make An Impression

The first two things someone is going to look at when they click on your profile are your header and profile picture.

Use the same profile picture consistently on every social media platform so you are easily recognizable. In other words, you want someone looking at your profile to know it is the same person they viewed on LinkedIn or elsewhere.

You may have noticed that a lot of marketing influencers use an image of themselves speaking as their header photos on LinkedIn, Twitter and on Facebook. It's a quick and direct way of signaling to people who come across their pages for the first time that they are influential in their field.

Even if you don't have speaking experience, there are other ways you can signal to people that you know your stuff. For example, you could use a picture of yourself doing something in your role–the more hands-on, the better. A shot of you interviewing someone for an article you're writing, or a shot of you working in a team.

If you don't want to use a picture of yourself, then look for another way to show your expertise. You could, for example, use an image of a project you've worked on. And please, avoid bad stock images.

For graphics to include in your actual posts, the design principles are the same. Generally, the kinds of graphics you will probably include in your posts are:

- ❏ pictures of projects you're working on
- ❏ photos from your day-to-day life
- ❏ charts and graphs related to your industry
- ❏ inspirational quotes
- ❏ helpful tips
- ❏ headers for blog posts

3. Pick Your Brand Colors
If you're a small business owner or a freelancer, you may already have brand colors. But if you don't, you will want to consider the psychological effect that colors have on viewers.

For example, bold primary colors are often perceived as youthful, energetic and cool, while tints are seen as calming and peaceful.

Select one or two colors that pair well and use consistently across your social media posts.

4. Pick Your Fonts
Fonts can communicate a lot about your style and approach to your job.

Think about it: how would you consider a person who uses Comic Sans versus someone who uses Futura? You'll probably think the person using Futura is more serious, right?

A quick look around pages of people and companies in your industry will give you a sense of the general aesthetic that is popular. Align your fonts with the industry you are pursuing.

5. Size Your Images For Each Site
Odds are that you will want to cross-post certain messages across multiple platforms. It's not always a good idea to set up your accounts so that anything you post on LinkedIn automatically posts to Twitter. Depending on the platform, the optimal image sizes can be different.

If you are posting images to promote a new project you're working on, or to make some other kind of exciting announcement, it's worth it to optimize your images for each platform so that they can perform well.

The optimal dimensions for in-post images (according to **SproutSocial**) are:

	Profile Picture	Header/Cover Image	Post/Shared Images
LinkedIn	400 x 400	1584 x 396	1104 x 736
Facebook	180 x 180	820 x 312	1200 x 630
Twitter	400 x 400	1500 x 500	440 x 220
Instagram	110 x 110	None	1080 x 1080
YouTube	800 x 800	2560 x 1440	1280 x 720

This is your opportunity to express yourself to the world. Think about the persona you want to convey and find ways to show that to others.

Keep in mind that more and more people are valuing authenticity and individuality over a "professional" appearance, so don't be afraid to let your interests outside of work and personality shine through.